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### Summary record of the 31st meeting

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*Chairman:* Mr. Balarezo. . . . . (Peru)

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*The meeting was called to order at 9.45 a.m.*

**Agenda item 88: Groups of countries in special situations** (*continued*) (A/59/115 and A/59/158)

**(a) Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries** (*continued*) (A/59/94-E/2004/77)

**(b) Specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation** (*continued*) (A/59/208)

1. **Ms. Katarwa** (Uganda), speaking on agenda item 88 (b), said that her delegation associated itself with the statements made by the representatives of Qatar, Benin and the Lao People's Democratic Republic on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Group of Least Developed Countries and the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, respectively.

2. The implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action continued to pose serious difficulties for Uganda, which was not only a landlocked and transit developing country but was also suffering from the ongoing decline in price of its major export commodities. For that reason, her delegation shared the view expressed in the Secretary-General's report (A/59/208) that a strong case could be made in respect of landlocked developing countries for giving high priority to financial and technical assistance for the improvement of transport infrastructure and to the management and maintenance of existing facilities.

3. The Almaty Programme of Action recognized the importance of regional arrangements for providing lasting solutions to the transit transport problems of landlocked developing countries. Within the East African Community one of the main areas of cooperation was transport infrastructure. Under the short-term plan for the infrastructure programme of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the following were considered to be of high priority: the Kenya-Uganda oil pipeline; institutional support for Kenyan, Ugandan and Tanzanian railways; the northern corridor road project; and the

telecommunication and information and communication technologies (ICT) sectors. The previous week, the African ministers responsible for water management had met in Kampala to set a regional energy strategy.

4. There were also joint efforts to ensure the sustainable management of the resources of Lake Victoria, improve navigation safety and reduce the high cost of transportation. The East African Customs Union, which would come into effect on 1 January 2005, sought to promote trade and investment in the region. Goods entering the East African Community would be subject to common rules, legal institutions and administrative structures, and the same external tariffs would be imposed. The new measures introduced into the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) would reduce transit costs considerably. At the national level, limited financial resources were allocated to infrastructure development as a matter of priority to stimulate economic growth.

5. Her delegation continued to believe that regional and subregional trade expansion and economic integration were key components in efforts to resolve the problems faced by the landlocked developing countries, as they helped to attract increased foreign direct investment and promoted export growth. The development of regional trade and integration would require careful planning and regional coordination. Her delegation therefore welcomed the decision by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to hold an expert meeting on the design and implementation of transit transport arrangements to discuss the best available solutions. The landlocked developing countries also welcomed the support of the United Nations system, including the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other international or regional and subregional organizations, as well as development partners and the private sector, for their efforts to implement the Almaty Programme of Action.

6. **Mr. Al-Zaabi** (Kuwait), speaking on agenda item 88, associated himself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Owing to its history and geography, Kuwait had always been aware of the importance of trade in the development and advancement of peoples and consequently had sought to develop trading relations with countries throughout the world and to play an

important commercial role, particularly in Asia and Africa.

7. Because of the need to strengthen that open-door policy and the hopes that it had engendered, Kuwait had created an appropriate legislative, regulatory and economic environment, modernized its infrastructure, consolidated its international relations and helped the private sector to shoulder its responsibilities for development.

8. The only solution for countries in special situations, particularly landlocked developing countries with economies dependent on a single source of income, was to establish partnerships with their neighbours for the development of effective transit systems and reduction of transit costs by streamlining transit operations across international borders. Such partnerships would enable those countries to have equitable access to international markets and allow for the implementation of international transport safety rules and environmental standards within an international trading system and international economy that took account of their special situation.

9. His delegation was aware of the importance of international cooperation and the establishment of sustainable development partnerships. Kuwait had therefore developed and financed projects with several developing countries. It continued to give them the necessary support and assistance to reach the Millennium Development Goals in various areas (such as road construction and repair, creation or modernization of airports, building of electric power stations and upgrading of electricity distribution networks, construction of bridges and tunnels and development of seaports. It was also helping the private sector to promote industrial development and make developing countries more competitive.

10. His delegation understood the specific needs of single-commodity exporting countries and landlocked developing countries with respect to new forms of international cooperation on transit transport. It renewed its support for the efforts made by those countries in all areas, particularly efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals and implement the Almaty and Brussels Programmes of Action. Lastly, it looked forward to taking an active part in informal consultations to obtain the best possible outcome for countries in special situations.

11. **Mr. Penjo** (Bhutan), speaking on agenda item 88, said that his delegation associated itself with the statements made by the representatives of Qatar, Benin and the Lao People's Democratic Republic on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Group of Least Developed Countries and the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, respectively.

12. He noted with appreciation the steps taken to ensure implementation of both the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 and the Almaty Programme of Action, following which he commended the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for the active and systematic pursuit of its mandate under General Assembly resolution 56/227.

13. It was encouraging to note that the governing bodies of 19 organizations had adopted decisions aimed at mainstreaming the Brussels Programme of Action into their respective programmes of work. Equally welcome was the initiative of the governing bodies of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNCTAD to undertake regular sectoral reviews of the Programme's implementation. As for the Almaty Programme of Action, he expressed appreciation for the initiatives taken by the Office of the High Representative, UNCTAD and the regional commissions of the United Nations system, as well as those taken by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

14. In order for the LDCs and the landlocked developing countries to overcome the formidable challenges facing them, the collective resolve of the international community to translate the internationally agreed goals into concrete actions in a spirit of true partnership and shared responsibility would be required. The increasing interest which development partners and international agencies showed in implementing the Brussels Programme of Action and the Almaty Programme of Action was encouraging, as were the initiatives which they had adopted to that end. He remained concerned, however, that many of the challenges confronting those countries, which had special needs, were far from being resolved. It was clear from the report of the Secretary-General and the statements made by the High Representative at the previous meeting that much remained to be done to end their marginalization and sustain the progress made by

some in their developmental process. If substantive progress was to be made in implementing the Brussels Programme of Action and the Almaty Programme of Action, it was crucial to ensure the timely allocation of adequate resources in a manner consistent with the needs of each country.

15. The LDCs, the landlocked developing countries and their transit developing neighbours were experiencing severe domestic resources constraints and were required to sustain the provision of basic socio-economic services, while also removing such structural constraints as lack of infrastructure and of institutional and human capacity, both of which were vital to enhancing productive capacity and strengthening economic self-reliance in the long term. His delegation was encouraged that, during the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2004, the high-level segment had been devoted to the theme of resources mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. While recognizing that the responsibility for development lay with each country, he sincerely hoped that development partners and international agencies would, as a matter of urgency, be increasingly responsive to the special needs of the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries as they pursued their efforts to create the necessary environment for their sustainable growth.

16. Bhutan had made notable progress through close cooperation with its development partners, whose support was vital to bridging the country's financial and technological gap with a view to the achievement of its development goals, including those articulated in the Millennium Declaration.

17. **Ms. Jemaneh** (Ethiopia), speaking on agenda items 88 (a) and 88 (b), said that, if the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries were to achieve their development goals and integrate into the globalizing world, it would be necessary for the international community to translate into concrete actions the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the Brussels Programme of Action. Commenting briefly on actions taken by Ethiopia in regard to some of the commitments contained in the Brussels Programme of Action, she said concerning

commitment 1 (Fostering a people-centred policy framework), that Ethiopia had developed a long-term development strategy known as "agricultural development-led industrialization", bearing in mind that some 85 per cent of the Ethiopian population derived its livelihood from agriculture. Ethiopia had also adopted an integrated rural development strategy, which focused on the medium term, and a sustainable development and poverty reduction strategy. In addition, attempts were under way to create an environment conducive to investment and trade. Concerning commitment 2 (Good governance at the national and international levels), various actions had been taken to promote democracy, together with the rule of law, transparency, accountability and efficiency in public institutions and practices. An anti-corruption commission had been established, and Ethiopia's third general elections would take place in May 2005. Ethiopia had engaged in relentless efforts to realize commitment 3 (Building human and institutional capacity). Initiatives had been launched to promote access to health and education. Within a decade, the primary school enrolment rate had more than doubled to 70 per cent. As to commitment 4 (Building productive capacities to make globalization work for the LDCs), Ethiopia was making concerted efforts in various fields, particularly in constructing roads to accelerate development in the rural sector and in adopting initiatives in the areas of power, telecommunications and water resources. Lack of infrastructure had been a key factor in hindering the ability of LDCs to benefit from market access initiatives taken in their interest. Most such countries were dependent on only a few commodities, which exposed them to external shocks produced by international price fluctuations and a decline in terms of trade.

18. Resources mobilization had been the theme of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in June 2004. While encouraged by the rise in official development assistance channelled to LDCs, a more thorough analysis of resource flows was required in order to determine the true level of that assistance, which remained far short of the agreed target. In per capita terms, Ethiopia still received only one half of the assistance provided to other African countries. Given the role which official development assistance could play in furthering Ethiopia's efforts to build infrastructure and promote investments in the social sectors, she invited all her country's development

partners to increase such assistance to the level of that channelled to other African countries.

19. Ethiopia welcomed the information, contained in the report of the Secretary-General, concerning activities for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action undertaken by the organizations of the United Nations system and other relevant international and regional organizations.

20. The landlocked developing countries were among the most vulnerable countries of the world. Of the 31 landlocked developing countries, 16 were also classified as least developed countries. They were without seaports, geographically remote and isolated from world markets, had poor infrastructure, maintenance problems and inadequate institutional environments, and were solely dependent on a very limited number of commodities for their export earnings.

21. In most cases, the transit neighbours of the least developing countries were themselves developing countries, with broadly similar economic structures and similar scarcities of resources. Trade between landlocked and transit developing countries tended to be relatively small. Most transit developing countries were in no position to offer efficient transport systems to which their landlocked transit neighbours might link themselves. An efficient transit transport system could be established through genuine partnerships between landlocked and transit developing countries and their developing partners at the national, bilateral, subregional, regional and global levels, as well as through partnership between the public and private sectors. In that connection, she commended the activities undertaken by the Economic Commission for Africa in order to promote and facilitate transit transport cooperation throughout Africa.

22. In adopting the Millennium Declaration, Member States had reaffirmed their commitment to the landlocked developing countries by calling on bilateral and multilateral donors to increase their financial and technical assistance to landlocked developing countries in order to meet their special development needs and help them to improve their transit transport systems. It was essential that the international community should do all within its power to implement the Almaty Programme of Action and achieve the goals set.

23. **Ms. Filippini** (Haiti), speaking on agenda item 88, said that her delegation associated itself with the

statements made by the representatives of Qatar and Benin on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the least developed countries (LDCs) respectively. The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 (Brussels Programme of Action) was an important framework for concerted action to free a tenth of the world's population from poverty. It was gratifying the LDCs were a source of concern for a number of United Nations bodies and agencies, that the Economic and Social Council had dedicated a high-level segment to resources mobilization in the context of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action in June 2004 and that consensus had been reached on a mechanism designed to help those countries gradually move out of the least developed category while nevertheless retaining certain advantages.

24. Her delegation was concerned, however, about the delay in implementing the Brussels Programme of Action, as such delay jeopardized the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, at least for LDCs which in the vast majority were finding it extremely difficult to implement the Programme of Action owing to a lack of institutional and human resources and their failure to attract investments. They also suffered the consequences of being vulnerable to natural catastrophes. Moreover, donor countries had reduced their official development assistance owing to a slowdown in their economic growth. Such assistance played an important role in improving the economic infrastructure of LDCs and it therefore needed to be made more predictable and effective. Haiti welcomed the fact that a number of States members of the European Union had made known their intention to increase their official development assistance.

25. Her delegation hoped that new initiatives would be launched jointly by LDCs and their development cooperation partners. Investments must lead to a tangible improvement in living conditions, in particular by granting people access to infrastructure and essential socio-economic services such as education, health care and drinking water supply. Market access, road services and natural resource management must also be developed.

26. Success was possible if all components of civil society — e.g. women, children, young people, underprivileged groups — participated in the development process and if poor people were granted access to financial services.

27. Haiti had recently been hit by political crises and devastating natural catastrophes and had therefore been unable to implement its poverty reduction strategy. Her Government nonetheless continued to attach great importance to the commitments it had made in connection with the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. The interim Government's programme emphasized good governance, poverty reduction and environmental protection, all priority areas of the Brussels Programme of Action.

28. Her delegation hoped that the commitments made by donors in Washington in July 2004 during the presentation of the interim cooperation framework would be met within a reasonable time frame. She looked forward to the Secretary-General's report on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and welcomed the idea of conducting a midterm review of the Brussels Programme of Action in 2006.

29. **Mr. Kazykhanov** (Kazakhstan) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries. The International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, held in August 2003 in Almaty (Kazakhstan), had been the first high-level global event organized by the United Nations to address the special needs and problems of landlocked developing countries. The Conference's principal result had been the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action, which his country believed was a well-balanced and focused document that would provide a basis for expanded cooperation frameworks in the area.

30. Despite the fact that a relatively short amount of time had passed since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 58/201 endorsing the outcomes of the Almaty Conference, his country noted with satisfaction that the implementation process of the Programme of Action had received a good level of support. The road map for implementation, which had been prepared by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and had been adopted in February 2004, would assist Member States, regional commissions, international and regional organizations and financial

institutions in implementing the Programme of Action in a focused and coordinated manner. Kazakhstan wished to confirm its readiness to host, in cooperation with the High Representative, an international meeting on the role of international, regional and subregional organizations in the implementation of the Programme of Action, in March 2005.

31. His delegation welcomed the outcome of the eleventh session of UNCTAD, held in São Paulo (Brazil) in June 2004, and stressed the need for full and effective implementation of the São Paulo Consensus, in particular paragraphs 66 and 84 thereof, which addressed the role of landlocked developing countries in the international trade system.

32. His delegation also welcomed the fact that on 1 August 2004, the General Council of WTO had decided that the multilateral trade negotiations launched under the Doha work programme would resume. His delegation joined in the appeal of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries for completion of the WTO work programme for small economies (which included landlocked developing countries) before the sixth WTO Ministerial Conference was held in Hong Kong (China) in December 2005. His delegation emphasized the importance of the effective participation of those countries in the Hong Kong negotiations and hoped that the Office of the High Representative, in cooperation with UNCTAD and the relevant regional commissions, would be able to provide assistance in convening a meeting of landlocked developing country trade ministers before the sixth WTO Ministerial Conference.

33. Successful implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action would depend on the support provided by the international community, including financial and development institutions and donor countries. His country had already contributed over \$100,000 to the special Trust Fund established to facilitate follow-up activities to the outcomes of the Almaty Conference. He called on other countries to show their commitment.

34. **Mr. Husain** (Observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference), speaking in connection with agenda item 88 (a), said that, in general, the Organization of the Islamic Conference endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraphs 75 to 86 of the Secretary-General's report

on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 (A/59/94-E/2004/77). He called particular attention to paragraph 75, which stressed that the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action depended to a large extent upon the partnership between LDCs and their development partners. However, primary responsibility rested with the former; the latter could play only a supporting role.

35. He drew attention to paragraph 3 of the report, which indicated that some 736 million people now lived in the 50 LDCs, and it was estimated that their numbers would reach 942 million by 2015. Given that half of the population of the LDCs lived on less than \$1 a day, if the trend continued the number of people living in extreme poverty in the LDCs could increase to 471 million by 2015. The Organization of the Islamic Conference found that trend to be most disturbing, as 23 of its 57 member States were LDCs. The threat could become reality if the income gap between the richest and the poorest countries of the world continued to widen, as was currently the case. In that connection, the Organization of the Islamic Conference welcomed the adoption, in New York on 20 September 2004, of the Declaration on Action against Hunger and Poverty.

36. On a more encouraging note, paragraph 7 of the report indicated that in spite of many impediments, progress had been achieved in the establishment of democratic regimes, the resolution of conflicts and nation-building efforts in LDCs. The Organization of the Islamic Conference held the view that good governance was a key to socio-economic development and that the signs of improvement were encouraging.

37. Referring to paragraph 11 of the report, he noted with satisfaction the significant increase in the number of countries that had designated national focal points for country-level coordination of the follow-up and implementation of the Programme of Action, 10 of which were member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

38. He then illustrated some of the actions being undertaken by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, through various institutions, to meet the goals of the Brussels Programme of Action. He noted, in particular, that the Islamic Development Bank had created a special programme of support aimed at poverty reduction and economic growth for LDCs that

were members of the Conference, and that the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry had created a programme of technical cooperation for the period 2003-2005. The possibility of establishing cooperation between the Islamic Chamber and United Nations bodies, notably the United Nations Development Programme, was being discussed.

39. The Brussels Programme of Action provided a comprehensive framework for instituting partnerships with LDCs so as to achieve poverty reduction, economic growth and sustainable development. To meet those goals, LDCs must remain committed to stressing good governance, sound economic policies and capacity-building. The international community must support the LDCs by increasing official development assistance, promoting trade and relieving debt.

40. **Ms. Zahran** (World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)) said that the interests of LDCs were high on the agenda of WIPO, which administered a special technical assistance programme to respond to the specific intellectual property needs of such countries. In addition to providing assistance to LDCs to enable them to meet their obligations under multilateral intellectual property instruments, WIPO aimed to empower them with tools to develop, protect, enforce and exploit intellectual property rights with a view to achieving economic, social and cultural development.

41. Creativity, innovation, information and knowledge were at the heart of economic growth and drove an effective intellectual property system. WIPO endeavoured to provide LDCs with such a system so as to enable them to access, build, manage and utilize information and knowledge. Working in close cooperation with LDCs, WIPO helped them to fulfil their development objectives by modernizing the administrative and legislative infrastructures relating to intellectual property. At the request of Governments, products tailor-made for individual countries had been developed focusing on institution-building, human resource development and the capacity to generate and utilize knowledge. At the policy level, WIPO provided legal advice to Governments with regard to the best way of integrating intellectual property into national economic development strategies. The organization's assistance through nationally focused action plans was multidisciplinary and encouraged dialogue among all stakeholders.

42. The WIPO agenda must be viewed in the overall context of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The organization could be relied upon to contribute significantly to the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals in cooperation with Member States, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, civil society, the private sector, and other partners in development.

43. Since the adoption of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, WIPO had been working to meet its goals, in particular: development of human resources by its Worldwide Academy; improved access to affordable ICT through its Global Information Network; creation of collective management societies; optimizing the wealth-creation potential of traditional knowledge, genetic resources and expressions of folklore; and helping small and medium-sized enterprises fully to exploit their innovative and creative capacities in order to enhance their competitiveness.

44. The Ministerial Conference on Intellectual Property for Least Developed Countries held in Seoul from 25 to 27 October 2004, under the auspices of WIPO and with the support of the Republic of Korea, had articulated policies and technical issues for integrating intellectual property into development strategies in LDCs. The Seoul Ministerial Declaration reflected the commitment of the international community to creating institutions dedicated to putting intellectual property at the service of development. It urged WIPO to strengthen its assistance to developing countries and to convene a ministerial conference for LDCs every three years. The Republic of Korea had established a special trust fund within the framework of WIPO to help developing countries, in particular LDCs.

45. WIPO was organizing, in cooperation with the Swedish Government, the Training and Advisory Programme on Intellectual Property for Least Developed Countries, to be held in Stockholm from 8 to 26 November 2004.

46. **The Chairman**, recalling the introductory statement made the previous day before the Second Committee by Mr. Jeffrey Sachs, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Millennium Development Goals and Director of the Millennium Project, reiterated that special attention must be paid to the particular needs of LDCs, landlocked countries and

small island developing States. He stressed that the main theme of the discussion on groups of countries in special situations had been the implementation of international agreements, such as the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the Almaty Programme of Action. He commended UNCTAD for advancing the discussion on the issue, and in particular for its proposal on linking prices of raw materials to debt servicing, and thanked WIPO for its contribution.

### **Agenda item 83: Macroeconomic policy questions**

#### **(a) International trade and development**

(A/C.2/59/L.25)

#### **(d) Commodities (A/C.2/59/L.26)**

47. **Mr. Al-Mahmoud** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced the draft resolution entitled "International trade and development" (A/C.2/59/L.25), which was a general commentary, based on development, concerning the decision taken by the General Council of WTO on 1 August 2004, the final documents of the eleventh session of UNCTAD, held in June 2004, and questions relating to the negotiations in Doha. He hoped that the draft would be adopted by consensus. He also introduced the draft resolution entitled "Commodities" (A/C.2/59/L.26) on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He noted that in the preamble the General Assembly had recalled the United Nations conferences and summit meetings relating to commodities. He summarized the operative text with particular emphasis on paragraph 16, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to prepare a comprehensive framework for action on commodity sector development, and paragraph 18, in which the Assembly urged those stakeholders that had expressed an interest in participating in the International Task Force on Commodities launched at the eleventh session of UNCTAD, as well as other interested parties, to contribute financially and substantively to the effective operation of the Task Force. He hoped that the draft would be adopted by consensus.



## **Agenda item 90: Operational activities for development**

### **(b) Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/C.2/59/L.28)**

48. **Mr. Al-Mahmoud** (Qatar) introduced the draft resolution entitled “Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system” (A/C.2/59/L.28) on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, emphasizing the importance of such a review four years after the adoption of the Millennium Declaration and one year before the General Assembly’s stock-taking of progress made in that respect. The Group of 77 and China attached great value to the operational activities for development of the United Nations system. In submitting the text to the Second Committee, they reserved the right to make changes or add paragraphs at a later stage.

### **Agenda item 91: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (A/59/89-E/2004/21 and A/59/3 (chap. I)**

49. **Ms. Al-Bassam** (Chief, Regional Commissions New York Office) introduced the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/59/89-E/2004/21, annex). The document indicated that the Israeli occupation was still the main cause of the current socio-economic plight of the Palestinian people. The Secretary-General had repeatedly underscored that a just and comprehensive peace offered the only realistic hope of ending the violence in the occupied territory.

50. The report focused on the socio-economic ramifications of Israel’s relentless efforts to expand its settlements and erect its barrier in the West Bank, the restrictions on mobility and the closures imposed by Israel, Israel’s destruction of infrastructure and crops and Israel’s ongoing policy of demolishing homes.

51. Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to be the primary cause of the conflict. In the West Bank, Israel had established more than 136 settlements (deemed illegal by the international community), where 236,000 settlers lived. In the Gaza Strip, 17 settlements housed some 7,000 people. Approximately 180,000 settlers lived in occupied East Jerusalem.

52. Settler planning zones had absorbed 41.9 per cent of land in the West Bank. The total area confiscated for settlements or designated as military zones in the Gaza Strip was 165.04 square kilometres, or 45 per cent of the territory of the Strip, accommodating 7,000 settlers. More than one million Palestinians were living on the remaining 55 per cent of the land. Although the Quartet road map required a “freeze” on the construction or growth of settlements, none had not been ordered. All settlement categories remained for a significant portion of Israel’s public investment and new building in the settlements had increased by 35 per cent in 2003.

53. The entrenchment of settlements by the Israeli Government was symbiotic with the building of the West Bank separation barrier, which had led to the confiscation and fragmentation of Palestinian land. That policy had aroused serious concerns about the possibility of establishing an independent and viable Palestinian State alongside Israel in the future.

54. The Israeli Government had reached an advanced stage in the construction of a barrier which would extend over a total length of 638 kilometres and cover 975 square kilometres (16.6 per cent) of the West Bank, most of it in occupied territory inhabited by 320,000 settlers, including those in occupied Jerusalem.

55. With the construction of the barrier, Israel would in fact annex most of the aquifer system in the West Bank (which provided 51 per cent of the West Bank’s water resources) and separate communities from their land and water resources, thereby depriving them of all means of subsistence and forcing many Palestinians living in those areas to leave, as 6,000 to 8,000 residents of Qalqilia had already done.

56. The restrictions imposed on the movement of goods and persons, in addition to curfews, exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory, deepening unemployment and poverty, preventing the provision of health care, interrupting

education and in general of humiliating the Palestinians individually and collectively.

57. Since March 2003, the building of 85 new checkpoints, 538 different kinds of trenches and ditches and 47 road gates and roadblocks and the existence of innumerable “flying” (mobile) checkpoints had effectively dissected the entire occupied territory into a large number of separate, isolated pockets. About 47 per cent of households had seen their income plummet by more than 50 per cent over the same period. The proportion of the population living in poverty had risen to 63 per cent. Two million Palestinians depended on food aid for survival and lived in absolute poverty, in other words on less than \$2 a day.

58. Those conditions had dealt a severe blow to the Palestinian economy. In 2003 alone, Israel’s confiscation and destruction of Palestinian homes and lands had swelled the number of homeless and internally displaced Palestinians by between 13,000 and 16,000 persons. Some 28,000 Palestinian homes were threatened with destruction at any moment. Israeli forces had destroyed 10 per cent of the arable land in Gaza. In the West Bank, the Israeli army and the settlers had uprooted hundreds of thousands of olive, citrus and other kinds of fruit trees and destroyed 806 wells and 296 agricultural warehouses.

59. Even before the construction of the barrier, the Government of Israel had permitted active discrimination against Palestinians in respect of access to water.

60. Sixty per cent of Palestinian families currently depended on water distributed from tankers, which consumed 17 to 40 per cent of the household income in the summer months. In some cases, because of checkpoints and closures, water tankers were not always able to reach villages and, as a result, some communities had been without water for several days.

61. The Israeli authorities had appropriated most of the Syrian Golan for military use or settlements. The remaining 18,000 Syrian Arabs maintained control over only a little more than 6 per cent of the original territory under occupation. As in the case of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the occupation of the Syrian Golan had resulted in the splitting of families, limited job opportunities and a reduction in health and education services.

62. The report of the Secretary-General had emphasized that, during the period under review, mounting economic and social damage from the military occupation had been noted. Most social and economic data pointed to a marked deterioration in the living conditions of the Palestinian people, including new forms of dispossession and destruction of private and public assets of all kinds.

63. As a consequence, the Occupied Palestinian Territory was once again regarded as a “war-torn economy”. Humanitarian assistance was not enough to protect the rights of Palestinian civilians living under occupation, or to ensure that they had a dignified life. The only way out of the current economic and social crisis was to end the occupation of the Palestinian territory and the Syrian Golan.

64. Suffering and dispossession had reached new heights in 2003 and might lead the Palestinian people to further doubt the efficacy of the unilateral and multilateral diplomatic efforts which had been made in an attempt to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

65. Halting the Israeli occupation remained the only way of ending the socio-economic plight of the Palestinian people.

66. **Mr. Elfarnawany** (Egypt) wanted to know how the occupation prevented the Palestinian people from achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Noting that the dreadful living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied territory were hardly conducive to development, he wondered whether or how ESCWA had addressed that issue in the report and whether it would be dealt with in future reports.

67. **Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed surprise at not finding any reference in the report to the dumping of radioactive waste in the occupied territories even though in its report, the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories had referred to the nuclear waste stored in the occupied territories, including in the Syrian Golan.

68. **Mr. Meron** (Israel) wondered why Ms. Al-Bassam had not referred to the Secretary-General’s favourable statement about the Israeli Prime Minister’s bold withdrawal plan, which was going to radically alter the situation in the occupied territories, and which had been welcomed by the Quartet.

69. **Ms. Al-Bassam** (Chief, Regional Commissions New York Office), replying to the Egyptian delegation's question, said that the regional commissions were currently preparing their regional reports on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. They were reviewing progress achieved in that regard by linking the goals to other socio-economic issues and would definitely address the situation in the occupied territories and the issue of the Palestinian people's capacity to achieve development goals. Those reports would be published in early 2005 and would be made available to delegations at the regional and Headquarters levels.

70. While the dumping of nuclear waste had not been dealt with in the report, she wished to assure the Syrian delegation that the appropriate action would be taken to ensure that the issue was included in the next report.

71. She noted, in response to the Israeli delegation, that, while the report quoted remarks made by the Secretary-General concerning the situation on the ground, it only covered periods during which no improvement had been observed in the situation of the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip and the socio-economic situation.

72. **Mr. Al-Emadi** (Qatar) said it was deplorable that, in addition to the many abuses committed against the Palestinian people, including confiscation of land, demolition of homes, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention and destruction of fruit trees, Israel had ignored the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and continued to build the separation wall, throwing many Palestinians out of their homes. The building of new Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory only further exacerbated tensions between the two peoples. The situation in the territory, characterized by poverty, unemployment and violence, was deteriorating steadily, making slimmer any hopes placed by the Palestinian people in the road map. As the number of children killed and wounded increased steadily, more and more jobs were lost, the personal freedoms of more people were violated and more communities disintegrated.

73. He vigorously condemned Israel for flouting the Security Council's resolutions and called upon the international community to urgently bring the parties to the negotiating table and ensure that Israel stopped its policy of violence, occupation and settlement. Reaffirming the inalienable rights of the Palestinian

people in the occupied territory, he noted that a just and global settlement to the conflict could be achieved, that the road map could be put back on track and that an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital could be established.

74. **Ms. Barghouti** (Permanent Observer for Palestine) said that the Palestinian people had been struggling for a long time to exercise its inalienable rights, including the right to permanent sovereignty over its natural resources. Attainment of those rights was fundamental for an independent and sovereign State of Palestine and for peace and security in the Middle East. The Palestinian people had endured more than it could from the prolonged occupation by Israel, the occupying Power, of its territory, the control, destruction and exploitation by Israel of its natural resources, confiscation of its land, demolition of houses, razing of agricultural land, diversion of water resources, uprooting of productive trees, destruction of the livelihoods of Palestinians, bringing the Palestinian economy to the verge of collapse.

75. In addition to the building of new bypass roads and new settlements, the occupying Power had continued the construction of the expansionist wall, which had been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice; that wall, which departed from the Green Line and cut deep into Palestinian territory, had led to the confiscation of more land and the destruction of property, crops and wells.

76. The international community must take urgent measures to compel Israel to cease its violations of international law in order for the rights of the Palestinian civilian population to its property and natural resources to be safeguarded. In that regard, she drew attention to the Durban Ministerial Declaration of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which called on the United Nations, Member States and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to take specific action.

77. The Secretary-General's report described in detail the dire economic and social situation of the Palestinian people and the variety of violations, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions and home demolitions, to which it was subjected by the occupying Power. Restrictions on the freedom of movement of persons and goods, including humanitarian assistance, medical and agricultural equipment, through a system of checkpoints and

roadblocks, coupled with closures and prolonged curfews, had caused a steep decline in production and increased unemployment, which could result in human catastrophe.

78. Therefore, the United Nations must continue to monitor the situation closely in an effort to bring an end to all illegal Israeli actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. In that regard, it must act to ensure that Israel respected its obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law. The international community must take urgent measures to halt the destruction of the Palestinian economy and ensure a sustainable life with dignity and rights for the Palestinian people by striving to end the Israeli occupation.

79. **Mr. Rahman** (Malaysia) expressed concern at all the repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the daily life of the Palestinian population detailed in the report. That occupation caused many deaths and was based on a policy of arbitrary arrests and detentions, forced population displacement, property destruction and confiscation and mobility restrictions. That population, which could no longer exploit its natural resources never mind make a living from such resources, had also lost its right to decent housing, education and health care.

80. The construction of the separation wall had further darkened that already gloomy picture; it had caused the destruction of homes, closure of businesses and enterprises, destruction of crops, and annexation of water resources and fertile agricultural land. Despite the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and General Assembly resolutions calling for its dismantlement and for the payment of reparations to those affected by it, work on the Wall was continuing.

81. Malaysia was deeply concerned over the predicament of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. Indeed, those Syrian Arabs could neither sink wells without authorization nor cultivate their agricultural land; they were levied heavy taxes on their water use, land and transportation, were surrounded by landmines and had limited access to job opportunities or education. The storage of nuclear waste in some parts of the territory raised the spectre of ecological disaster.

82. The Palestinian people must be able to exercise its inalienable rights over its natural resources and was

entitled to enjoy a normal life. The international community must not abandon it in its moment of distress; every effort should be made to prevail upon Israel to end its occupation and honour its international obligations and ensure that the right of the population in the occupied territories to its natural wealth and to a decent life was restored. It was urgent to bring the two parties back to the negotiating table and to resuscitate the road map in order to settle the conflict once and for all.

83. **Mr. Al-Hameli** (United Arab Emirates) said that the note by the Secretary-General (A/59/89-E/2004/21) reaffirmed once again that the Israeli occupation, the criminal practices perpetrated by the Israeli forces against the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and against the Arab people in the occupied Syrian Golan and the grave violations of international law committed by Israel were the main causes of the tragedy affecting the lives of people in those territories. Israel was continuing to launch large-scale attacks against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank, inflicting further destruction and losses in terms of lives and property. Despite the numerous international resolutions reaffirming the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and of the Arab population of the Syrian Golan to their natural resources and demanding that Israel should refrain from exploiting those natural resources, destroying them, causing their depletion or endangering them, and denouncing the hostile and illegal practices of Israel, that country continued to construct new settlements, to impose closure and severe restrictions, and to destroy the infrastructure and demolish houses in violation of all norms of international humanitarian law, in particular the provisions of the fourth Geneva Convention. Areas confiscated for settlements or designated as military zones had absorbed a major part of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In addition, Israel was continuing to construct a separation barrier by means of which it aimed to confiscate more lands from the Palestinians, defying the International Court of Justice and resolutions of the General Assembly on that matter.

84. By confiscating and destroying Palestinian land and homes, Israel had increased the number of homeless and displaced persons. The Israeli forces had also destroyed thousands of hectares of arable land and hundreds of wells and agricultural warehouses. The restrictions on the movement of persons and the

closure policy had caused heavy losses to the Palestinian economy, leading to increased unemployment and poverty. The Israeli authorities were also continuing to confiscate land and expand the settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan. Owing to the restrictions imposed by Israel on travel between the Golan and the Syrian Arab Republic, Arab families had been scattered and prevented from gaining access to education and well-paid jobs entitling them to health insurance or social security.

85. The United Arab Emirates denounced the occupation of the Arab lands by Israel and the war crimes committed by that country against the Palestinians, and it condemned the destruction by the Israeli authorities of the natural resources of the Palestinians and their means of subsistence, believing that such action was an attempt to empty the occupied territory of its people. It reaffirmed that the ending of the occupation by Israel of all the Arab territories was the only solution that would bring an end to the economic and social sufferings of the Palestinian people and of the other Arabs in the occupied Syrian Golan. It called on the international community to exert pressure on Israel to put an end to its aggression in the occupied Palestinian territories and to comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Israel should be forced to resume peace talks in accordance with the Arab peace initiative and the road map which called for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

86. The United Arab Emirates also called on Israel to dismantle the separation barrier and compensate the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Arab territories for the losses they had suffered as a result of Israeli aggression against their lives and property and the destruction of their natural resources and livelihood.

87. **Mr. Meron** (Israel), noting that the report submitted to the Committee was pessimistic and unbalanced, began by giving some examples of cooperation activities on the ground between Israel, the Palestinians and other parties in connection with natural resources, as they offered a ray of hope for all inhabitants of the region. A number of meetings had been held recently, or were shortly due to take place, in particular, the second Israeli-Palestinian Water Conference which had been held in October 2004 in Turkey under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United States Agency for International Development

and the Israel-Palestine Centre for Research and Information, the meeting of a working group on dry land management organized by the World Bank and due to be held in Paris during the current month, the meeting of Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian water management experts in Prague within the framework of the Multilateral Working Group on Water Resources at the end of November, and the scientific conference to be held by the Middle East Desalination Research Centre in Limassol, Cyprus, with the participation of experts from the Middle East. Israel was also working closely with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the implementation of the UNEP desk study of the environment in the territories. Such cooperative efforts were the vehicles that could effectively overcome the natural resource-related challenges in the region.

88. Unfortunately, the report before the Committee would do nothing to alleviate conditions on the ground. It was only through dialogue and bilateral and regional negotiations that the issues of natural resources and the environment could be settled. There was an agreed-upon framework for the resolution of such issues and that was how they should be resolved. In addition to that fundamental weakness, the report was also replete with factual inaccuracies. For example, in the section entitled "Natural resources, water and environment", which attempted to show that Israel's water usage was extravagant and wasteful, the figures given were wrong. If the authors of the report had asked Israel for accurate figures, they would have been provided. The total per capita water consumption in Israel was less than half of that defined by the United Nations as the "shortage red line". Israel's total water consumption had not increased during the past 15 to 20 years, despite the fact that the population had doubled; per capita water consumption in Israel was one of the lowest in the Middle East.

89. The report claimed that during the construction of Israel's security fence, the Palestinians had lost 29 wells: that was simply incorrect. The truth was that the Palestinians had not lost a single well because of the fence. Similarly, contrary to what was claimed in the report, any damage caused by the Israeli Defence Forces in the ongoing campaign against Palestinian terror was repaired immediately, in full cooperation with the Palestinian Water Authority. A major flaw of the report was its failure to give context to the matters discussed. It painted a picture of the destruction of

agricultural property but failed to mention that, over the previous three years, over 450 Qassam rockets had been fired at Israeli population centres from Palestinian farmland and residential areas, killing many innocent civilians.

90. Israel was a world leader in water conservation and agriculture and had always sought to share its expertise in that regard with its neighbours through regional cooperation, for example within the framework of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which had prepared the report. That report would not unfortunately help to bring the people of the region any closer to living together in peace with one another. The Committee should refrain from considering reports such as that which showed a bias against one party to the conflict, chose information selectively and, as a result, merely exacerbated tensions and aggravated the situation. It would be better to focus on actually working together towards a better future.

91. The disengagement initiative of the Israeli Government, which had been welcomed by the Quartet and by the international community as a whole, aimed to do precisely that by bringing greater stability and security to both Israelis and Palestinians. By acting in good faith, the Government of Israel hoped to be able to revive the peace process and return to the level of cooperation that had existed before the outbreak of violence four years previously. Through cooperation and mutual respect, Israelis and Palestinians would be able to live in peace and security and enjoy the benefits of their natural resources. That was Israel's vision; his delegation hoped that it could be realized.

92. **Ms. Al-Bassam** (Chief, Regional Commissions New York Office) stressed that the statistics in the report had been arrived at in consultation with the international organizations working in the region, such as the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Labour Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and had been carefully checked. The drafters of the report had also consulted official documents published in Israel. The secretariat was fully aware of the political nature of reports presented under the current agenda item and had always been meticulous in ascertaining the accuracy of figures quoted.

93. **Ms. Awan** (Pakistan) said that the report was a reminder to the international community that

Palestinians had been subjected to deepening economic and social hardship by the occupying Power in violation of their right to self-determination. The report provided a detailed account of the persistent decline in living conditions and the continued abusive and criminal practices of Israel. The Secretary-General had concluded that the consequences of occupation had brought the occupied Palestinian territory to "war-torn economy" status, and that its continuation had led to new forms of dispossession and destruction of private and public assets of all kinds. The report had also pointed out that the number of extrajudicial killings had intensified, that the erection of the barrier that fragmented Palestinian territories separated the inhabitants from their lands and restricted access to their farms, jobs and services. Large numbers of Palestinians had been imprisoned or detained without any judicial procedure or formal charge, and the process of construction and growth of settlements persisted in blatant disregard for the road map of the Quartet. Furthermore, Israel had exploited Palestinian resources such as water, to its benefit, thereby creating a serious water shortage for Palestinians. Severe restrictions on the freedom of movement had led to job losses, primarily affecting food production to the extent that the territory was no longer self-sufficient in food. The depleted economy had lost the gains it had achieved during 15 years of growth, and as a result, poverty was widespread. The population in the occupied Syrian Golan was in a similar position. The expansion of Israeli settlements and confiscation of land by the occupying Power had continued unabated, crippling restrictions on movement and the eroding social infrastructure had led to a deterioration in living conditions and the dismemberment of families. Pakistan had steadfastly and unequivocally supported the just struggle for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people as it supported all peoples suffering under foreign domination. Lasting peace in the Middle East could only be achieved through the attainment of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. As President Musharraf had said, the international community and the United States in particular, must work to secure a fair and peaceful solution through the realization of the vision of two States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side in peace, harmony and security. Her delegation hoped that the faithful implementation of the provisions of the Quartet road map and the resumption of dialogue between the two parties would lay the foundations for a permanent

peace in the Middle East. A durable settlement of the Middle East question, by definition, must include the restoration of the Syrian Golan. A durable peace in the region was inconceivable without justice.

94. **Mr. El Farnawany** (Egypt) said that the report under consideration by the Committee described a harsh situation which, if it continued, would have serious consequences for all peoples of the region. It threatened to undermine the achievement of the objectives which the international community was pursuing under the auspices of the United Nations. The occupying Power continued to flout the inalienable rights of the inhabitants of the occupied Arab territories in violation of the provisions of international conventions and agreements, especially the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. The occupying Power continued to implement policies and practices that undermined international peace and security and compromised efforts to attain common development objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals. It was clear from the report that Israeli practices had thwarted the development efforts of the Palestinian people.

95. In that regard, in order to give some context, his delegation drew attention to the relationship between the Israeli occupation and the steps taken by the international community to establish peace and their consequences for the Palestinian people. The Millennium Development Goals placed high priority on the mobilization of all efforts aimed at poverty eradication. Yet, in the occupied Palestinian territories, restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, and damage to the infrastructure, amounting to several hundred millions of dollars, had led to a deterioration in the economic and social situation, thereby exacerbating poverty. Moreover, the growth of Israeli settlements, which were illegal under the rules of international law, had raised tensions, with repercussions on the living conditions of the Palestinian people. The second Millennium Development Goal concerned education. A study of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories showed that efforts to improve education had been in vain. Owing to the closure policies and curfews imposed by the occupying Power and the destruction of schools, the success rate of Palestinian students had dropped by 14.5 per cent during the 2002-2003 scholastic year. The report highlighted the problems created by Israeli occupation with respect to the promotion of gender

equality and the empowerment of women, the third Goal. The situation similarly affected the achievement of the fourth, fifth and sixth Goals on the reduction of child mortality, health care and combating disease, respectively. Owing to the occupation, some 1.4 million Palestinians (40 per cent of the population) lived with food insecurity, and checkpoints and curfews had hurt the public health situation by preventing access to health care. As to the seventh Goal, which was to ensure sustainable development, in 2003 Israel had bulldozed thousands of trees and hectares of land and destroyed five water wells in the Gaza Strip, while the separation wall had had a very grave impact on the Palestinian people and its sovereignty, with Israel annexing approximately 50 per cent of the water resources of the West Bank. It was not clear how the Palestinian people could, under such conditions, participate effectively in global partnerships, which was the eighth Goal. During the previous year's discussion, his delegation had asked how the international community could turn a blind eye to such repression and aggression, particularly when attempts were being made to re-establish economic cooperation among independent countries and to promote international development efforts. The same question could once again be posed. Egypt believed that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals depended on international solidarity, the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and United Nations resolutions, and it was therefore time to end Israeli occupation and practices that deprived Palestinians of their basic resources and prevented them from attaining the economic and social development objectives decided on at the international level. Discussions on the arrangements for the follow-up to the outcomes of the Millennium Summit and major United Nations conferences at the 2005 meeting would provide an appropriate opportunity to study the harmful effects of Israeli occupation on Palestinian development efforts, and the topic should be included in the report to be submitted in that regard. In conclusion, his delegation appealed for real efforts to be made to end the occupation of Palestine, which ran contrary to the goals and principles established in the Charter of the United Nations, including the right to self-determination, and to the provisions of international resolutions, and called for support for international development efforts.

96. **Mr. Al-Ghanem** (Kuwait) said that the Palestinian situation was catastrophic because of

continued Israeli practices against the encircled and defenceless Palestinian people. The occupying Israeli forces continued to destroy industrial installations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as thousands of hectares of agricultural land that would take decades to restore. Israel's policy of obstructing the delivery of international assistance and engaging in systematic assassinations and arrests of Palestinians had curbed development in general.

97. The delegation of Kuwait wished to highlight a few examples to illustrate the true situation caused by the Israeli occupying forces. First, the confiscation of Palestinian homes by the Israeli authorities had left over 16, 000 persons homeless in 2003, and since they had not been recognized as refugees they could not benefit from the protection offered by the international community. Secondly, by blocking main and secondary roads in various Palestinian towns, conducting air raids and constructing a separation wall, the occupying Power had crippled the Palestinian economy and aggravated the unemployment and poverty situation (44 per cent decline in average income and more than 50 per cent of Palestinian families living in extreme poverty). Thirdly, the practices of the Israeli occupying forces directed against the Palestinian people had removed every chance for attracting foreign investment to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Such investment had fallen by 90 per cent at the start of 2003. Fourthly, Israeli forces had attacked four banks in the Palestinian territories and had confiscated millions of dollars under the pretext that those amounts had been deposited in suspicious accounts. Fifthly, the occupying forces constantly impeded the work of humanitarian organizations, preventing them from reaching the populations because of hundreds of fixed checkpoints and countless mobile checkpoints. The measures adopted in the port of Hajdoud, obstructing the delivery of humanitarian assistance and development aid, had prompted the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to suspend food aid supplies to Palestinian towns. Sixthly, it should be noted that in the occupied Syrian Golan the Syrians were unable to cultivate their very fertile lands because the occupation authorities prevented them from establishing a water supply infrastructure for development and human consumption. In 2004, the Israeli authorities had confiscated agricultural land in villages of the Syrian Golan and destroyed fruit trees; and they had imposed coercive measures on Syrians studying abroad, preventing them from returning to the

Golan. Furthermore, the inhabitants of the Syrian Golan lived under the constant threat of landmines.

98. The occupied Palestinian and Arab territories were the setting for dehumanizing practices. The erosion of the economic and social fabric due to continued Israeli military occupation was accompanied by the deterioration of living conditions for Palestinians and Arabs living under the yoke of Israeli occupation to the point where humanitarian assistance was no longer sufficient. The only way to remedy the dire situation which the Palestinian people had to endure was to end the occupation of its territory and of the Syrian Golan and all other occupied territories in order to make way for fair development and an opportunity for the Palestinian people to share in the benefits of globalization. That would require the withdrawal of Israel from all the occupied Arab territories to the 4 June 1967 line, the recognition of all the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including first and foremost the creation of an independent State, and the implementation of the Arab peace initiative adopted at the 2002 Beirut Summit.

*The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.*